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Leza L Olson 09/19/2006 01:05:52 PM From DB/Inbox: Leza L Olson

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 03729

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ACTION: POL  
INFO: IPSC ECON DAO AMB AID RSO CONS PD DCM IMO RES  
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DISSEMINATION: POL  
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: DCM:GCRETZ  
DRAFTED: POL:VREIDHEAD  
CLEARED: POL:MSIEVERS, ECON:AABELL

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INFO RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEL AVIV 003729

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/18/2016  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#)  
SUBJECT: NAZARETH MAYOR PESSIMISTIC ON POSTWAR JEWISH-ARAB  
RELATIONS

Classified By: DCM Gene Cretz for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1. (C) In a September 13 meeting with Emboffs, longtime Nazareth Mayor Ramiz Jaraisy painted a bleak picture of postwar relations between Israel,s Jewish and Arab communities. He argued that Israel had chosen &force over peace8 in its invasion of southern Lebanon, and that Israeli Arabs felt betrayed by the government,s failure to build adequate bomb shelters in their communities. At the same time, he acknowledged a widespread Israeli Arab pride in the ability of Hizballah to damage Israel. He feared that calls for the expulsion of Arabs from the West Bank and/or the Israeli political system were on the rise, and complained about what he sees as a unique level of discrimination against Nazareth.

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JEWS AND ARABS IN THE WAKE OF THE WAR  
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2. (C) Jaraisy argued that while Hizballah launched the first salvo in the recent war in Lebanon by kidnapping two Israeli soldiers, the GOI had planned the war in advance and was simply waiting for an excuse to invade Lebanon again. He claimed that before the war, PM Olmert,s government had two options: to make peace by accepting the Arab League Initiative (i.e. full Israeli withdrawal to pre-1967 borders), or to &rely on the U.S. and a position of force and power8 to achieve its goals. According to Jaraisy, the war in Lebanon demonstrated that the GOI had chosen &force and power8 over peace.

3. (C) In response to questions about Arab-Jewish relations in Israel in the wake of the war, Jaraisy acknowledged a deepening animosity and suspicion on both sides. While he claimed that &ninety-nine percent8 of Israeli Arabs still value their Israeli nationality and are loyal to the state

even as they struggle against its policies, he also confided that Israeli Arabs felt some dignity that an Arab side can (inflict) pain on Israel.<sup>8</sup>

14. (C) On the Jewish side, he worried that religious nationalists were gaining ground and would become increasingly vocal in their calls to expel Arabs from the West Bank and/or swap Arab communities in Israel for Jewish ones in the West Bank. The September 10 comments by NU/NRP MK Effi Eitam (leader of the party's Religious-Zionist faction) advocating the expulsion of the great majority<sup>8</sup> of Palestinians from the West Bank and the exclusion of Israeli Arabs from the Israeli political system showed that the topic was no longer even taboo, Jaraisy claimed. He added that religious extremists on both sides were hijacking the peace process and Arab-Jewish relations, and that the chances for a peaceful resolution to the conflict were receding as a result.

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ARABS LEFT UNPROTECTED DURING THE WAR  
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15. (C) Jaraisy said that the government's longstanding neglect of Arab communities in the north was highlighted during the war as Arabs realized that their towns lacked protection from incoming rockets. (NOTE: Israeli Arabs suffered 18 of 39 civilian deaths from rockets strikes during the war, according to reports by Yediot Aharonot). He said that after the first Gulf War in 1991, Arab municipalities had asked the Home Front Command to construct bomb shelters for them, but nothing was done. He added that only about fifteen percent of Nazareth's (population 70,000) structures were constructed after the 1992 law mandating that all new structures built in Israel have reinforced safe havens that could provide some level of protection during an attack. Consequently, most Arabs in the north had nowhere safe to go once the rockets started falling.

16. (C) Jaraisy complained that while all Arab municipalities suffer from state neglect, Nazareth, the largest Arab city in the country, suffered most. He accused right wing politicians of deliberately sabotaging the welfare of Nazareth during the past ten years. As a result, he said, Nazareth receives every year the smallest (as a percentage of assessed need) of the annual grants the state gives to all municipalities to help balance their budgets. He also accused right-wingers,<sup>8</sup> led by Binyamin Netanyahu, of sabotaging his city's bid to capitalize on the millennium with the Nazareth 2008 tourism and infrastructure project. He claimed also that Likud and Shas politicians (in the governing coalition at the time) fabricated the 1999 Muslim-Christian rift over the disputed Shihab al-Din holy site in Nazareth. (NOTE: Unlike comments at the time, when Jaraisy and other Christian Arabs accused Muslim and Jewish political leaders of conspiring against the Christians, he now seems more interested in portraying Christians and Muslims as co-victims of a Jewish right wing conspiracy to divide them).

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COMMENT: DEEPENING DIVIDE  
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17. (C) Jaraisy belongs to Hadash, a staunchly left wing political party comprised of both Arabs and Jews, which currently holds three Knesset seats. His comments reflect in part the political outlook of his party, the successor to Israel's Communist Party, and he launches into hyperbole when discussing his view of Nazareth as a persecuted city. However, the portrait he paints of an Israeli Arab community feeling increasingly besieged, neglected and vulnerable in the wake of the war in Lebanon rings true. While he described at length what he sees as unwarranted Israeli aggression, he did not address Hezbollah's role in the war, nor did he address the Israeli-Arab backlash against Hezbollah for launching rockets on their communities. The war clearly deepened the Jewish-Arab divide in Israel as

Arabs wrestle with their conflicted identities and Jews fear  
a fifth column of disloyal citizens.

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JONES